
To create a better future for those impacted by brain injury through awareness, support, advocacy, community engagement, and the prevention of brain injury.

Letter of Support to the Interim Education and Local Government Committee

January 14, 2015

Chairman and Committee Members:

Having been a longtime and steadfast proponent of and having collaborated with the drafting of the original language for the Dylan Steigers' Protection of Youth Athletes Act, we, the Brain Injury Alliance of Montana (BIAMT), want to reaffirm our commitment to ensuring the intent of the Act and its supporting legislation is carried out to its full potential.

The initial passing of the Dylan Steigers Act and the subsequent passing of HJ26 reflects the Montana legislature's commitment to our Montana youth and to protecting the well-being of Montana's future. HJ26 was intended to evaluate how well the Dylan Steigers Act was implemented and to identify what changes, if any, to the language of the law is required to ensure that all Montana youth athletes are protected. We are here at today's committee meeting to lend our perspective on the implications of Dr. Moody's research and identify areas that still warrant legislative action for successful implementation. The BIAMT congratulates Dr. Moody and her team for undertaking the interim study and we look forward to more study and discovery.

BIAMT Legislative Recommendations

- (1) We agree with the recommendations Dr. Moody and colleagues make specific to expanding section 3, subsection (3) of the Act to include non-sanctioned sports activities. We know this has been a point of contention with concerns regarding available resources and the potential for litigation. At the very least, a study should be mandated to assess the extent to which these activities have concussion policies in place in order to conclusively ascertain whether or not there is a need to incorporate non-sanctioned sports under the current law. At this time, it is premature to assume that such programs have evidence-based concussion and return to play policies in place.
- (2) The findings of the interim study demonstrate that documents related to concussion education for the youth athletes and their parents are not being collected and, or retained. To that end, BIAMT recommends including additional language to section 4,

subsection (2) indicating that the signed documents are retained and stored by the responsible parties.

- (3) In addition to mandating new research on existing policies for non-sanctioned sports activities, BIAMT also encourages adding a clause allowing for the undertaking of future studies every few years to monitor overall progress and adherence to the Act as it was intended.

General Comments

BIAMT recognizes the Dylan Steigers Act and supporting legislation have been discussed across a host of committees, to include the Senate Judiciary Committee, the House Education Committee, and now the Interim Education and Local Government Committee. The diversity of committees reflects the broad swatch of disciplines and stakeholders affected by the public health burden of concussions, in general, and more specifically, among our vulnerable youth. The successful undertaking of protecting our youth coupled with growing awareness and emerging advances in diagnosis and treatment of brain injury will necessitate involvement by policymakers for years to come. For this reason, BIAMT encourages the Interim Committee and all Montana legislators to continue to exercise due diligence on this vital matter.

We recognize as senators and representatives, it is challenging to balance the pros and cons of legislating such a sensitive subject. However, as current legislators, your constituents are looking to you to address important issues that pertain directly to the long term needs of their children. The implications are far reaching. Please keep in mind, that these children, should they sustain multiple brain injuries, could also incur a possible lifetime of side effects that will affect not only their long-term health, but potentially their education and employability as they continue into adulthood. Consequences from a brain injury not only impact the individual but also adversely affect their families, caregivers, our communities and the state as a whole.

As a statewide organization, BIAMT assists individuals with brain injuries and their families and caregivers. We see their struggles on a daily basis and appreciate how the impact of positive policymaking can raise the standards of health for this vulnerable population. Therefore, we continue to advocate for policymaker involvement to ensure the protection of all Montana youth at risk for brain injury and we beseech you to integrate the recommendations from the interim study into the existing legislation. For this, we thank you for your time and consideration.

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* The Brain Injury Alliance of Montana (BIAMT) is the only organization in the state dedicated solely to the purpose of assisting persons with brain injury and their families. The BIAM T is dedicated to providing education, support, advocacy, resources and referrals for individuals with brain injuries and their families but does not provide medical diagnosis or advice.



Student-Athlete & Parent/Legal Guardian Concussion Statement

Because of the passage of the Dylan Steiger's Protection of Youth Athletes Act, schools are required to distribute information sheets for the purpose of informing and educating student-athletes and their parents of the nature and risk of concussion and head injury to student athletes, including the risks of continuing to play after concussion or head injury. Montana law requires that each year, before beginning practice for an organized activity, a student-athlete and the student-athlete's parent(s)/legal guardian(s) must be given an information sheet, and both parties must sign and return a form acknowledging receipt of the information to an official designated by the school or school district prior to the student-athletes participation during the designated school year. The law further states that a student-athlete who is suspected of sustaining a concussion or head injury in a practice or game shall be removed from play at the time of injury and may not return to play until the student-athlete has received a written clearance from a licensed health care provider.

Student-Athlete Name: _____

This form must be completed for each student-athlete, even if there are multiple student-athletes in each household.

Parent/Legal Guardian Name(s): _____

☐ We have read the *Student-Athlete & Parent/Legal Guardian Concussion Information Sheet*.

If true, please check box

After reading the information sheet, I am aware of the following information:

Student-Athlete Initials		Parent/Legal Guardian Initials
	A concussion is a brain injury, which should be reported to my parents, my coach(es), or a medical professional if one is available.	
	A concussion can affect the ability to perform everyday activities such as the ability to think, balance, and classroom performance.	
	A concussion cannot be "seen." Some symptoms might be present right away. Other symptoms can show up hours or days after an injury.	
	I will tell my parents, my coach, and/or a medical professional about my injuries and illnesses.	N/A
	If I think a teammate has a concussion, I should tell my coach(es), parents, or licensed health care professional about the concussion.	N/A
	I will not return to play in a game or practice if a hit to my head or body causes any concussion-related symptoms.	N/A
	I will/my child will need written permission from a licensed health care professional to return to play or practice after a concussion.	
	After a concussion, the brain needs time to heal. I understand that I am/my child is much more likely to have another concussion or more serious brain injury if return to play or practice occurs before concussion symptoms go away.	
	Sometimes, repeat concussions can cause serious and long-lasting problems.	
	I have read the concussion symptoms on the Concussion fact sheet.	

Signature of Student-Athlete

Date

Signature of Parent/Legal Guardian

Date



A Fact Sheet for **ATHLETES**

WHAT IS A CONCUSSION?

A concussion is a brain injury that:

- Is caused by a bump or blow to the head
- Can change the way your brain normally works
- Can occur during practices or games in any sport
- Can happen even if you haven't been knocked out
- Can be serious even if you've just been "dinged"

WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS OF A CONCUSSION?

- Headache or "pressure" in head
- Nausea or vomiting
- Balance problems or dizziness
- Double or blurry vision
- Bothered by light
- Bothered by noise
- Feeling sluggish, hazy, foggy, or groggy
- Difficulty paying attention
- Memory problems
- Confusion
- Does not "feel right"

WHAT SHOULD I DO IF I THINK I HAVE A CONCUSSION?

- **Tell your coaches and your parents.** Never ignore a bump or blow to the head even if you feel fine. Also, tell your coach if one of your teammates might have a concussion.

- **Get a medical checkup.** A doctor or health care professional can tell you if you have a concussion and when you are OK to return to play.
- **Give yourself time to get better.** If you have had a concussion, your brain needs time to heal. While your brain is still healing, you are much more likely to have a second concussion. Second or later concussions can cause damage to your brain. It is important to rest until you get approval from a doctor or health care professional to return to play.

HOW CAN I PREVENT A CONCUSSION?

Every sport is different, but there are steps you can take to protect yourself.

- Follow your coach's rules for safety and the rules of the sport.
- Practice good sportsmanship at all times.
- Use the proper sports equipment, including personal protective equipment (such as helmets, padding, shin guards, and eye and mouth guards). In order for equipment to protect you, it must be:
 - > The right equipment for the game, position, or activity
 - > Worn correctly and fit well
 - > Used every time you play

Remember, when in doubt, sit them out!
It's better to miss one game than the whole season.



A Fact Sheet for PARENTS

WHAT IS A CONCUSSION?

A concussion is a brain injury. Concussions are caused by a bump or blow to the head. Even a "ding," "getting your bell rung," or what seems to be a mild bump or blow to the head can be serious.

You can't see a concussion. Signs and symptoms of concussion can show up right after the injury or may not appear or be noticed until days or weeks after the injury. If your child reports any symptoms of concussion, or if you notice the symptoms yourself, seek medical attention right away.

WHAT ARE THE SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF A CONCUSSION?

Signs Observed by Parents or Guardians

If your child has experienced a bump or blow to the head during a game or practice, look for any of the following signs and symptoms of a concussion:

- Appears dazed or stunned
- Is confused about assignment or position
- Forgets an instruction
- Is unsure of game, score, or opponent
- Moves clumsily • Answers questions slowly
- Loses consciousness (even briefly)
- Shows behavior or personality changes
- Can't recall events prior to hit or fall
- Can't recall events after hit or fall

Symptoms Reported by Athlete

- Headache or "pressure" in head
- Nausea or vomiting
- Balance problems or dizziness
- Double or blurry vision
- Sensitivity to light
- Sensitivity to noise
- Feeling sluggish, hazy, foggy, or groggy
- Concentration or memory problems
- Confusion
- Does not "feel right"

HOW CAN YOU HELP YOUR CHILD PREVENT A CONCUSSION?

Every sport is different, but there are steps your children can take to protect themselves from concussion.

- Ensure that they follow their coach's rules for safety and the rules of the sport.
- Encourage them to practice good sportsmanship at all times.
- Make sure they wear the right protective equipment for their activity (such as helmets, padding, shin guards, and eye and mouth guards). Protective equipment should fit properly, be well maintained, and be worn consistently and correctly.
- Learn the signs and symptoms of a concussion.

WHAT SHOULD YOU DO IF YOU THINK YOUR CHILD HAS A CONCUSSION?

1. Seek medical attention right away. A health care professional will be able to decide how serious the concussion is and when it is safe for your child to return to sports.

2. Keep your child out of play. Concussions take time to heal. Don't let your child return to play until a health care professional says it's OK. Children who return to play too soon—while the brain is still healing—risk a greater chance of having a second concussion. Second or later concussions can be very serious. They can cause permanent brain damage, affecting your child for a lifetime.

3. Tell your child's coach about any recent concussion. Coaches should know if your child had a recent concussion in ANY sport. Your child's coach may not know about a concussion your child received in another sport or activity unless you tell the coach.

Remember, when in doubt, sit them out!

It's better to miss one game than the whole season.

Be Prepared

A concussion is a type of traumatic brain injury, or TBI, caused by a bump, blow, or jolt to the head that can change the way your brain normally works. Concussions can also occur from a blow to the body that causes the head to move rapidly back and forth. Even a “ding,” “getting your bell rung,” or what seems to be mild bump or blow to the head can be serious. Concussions can occur in any sport or recreation activity. So, all coaches, parents, and athletes need to learn concussion signs and symptoms and what to do if a concussion occurs.

SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF A CONCUSSION

SIGNS OBSERVED BY PARENTS OR GUARDIANS	SYMPTOMS REPORTED BY YOUR CHILD OR TEEN	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">•Appears dazed or stunned•Is confused about events•Answers questions slowly•Repeats questions•Can't recall events prior to the hit, bump, or fall•Can't recall events after the hit, bump, or fall•Loses consciousness (even briefly)•Shows behavior or personality changes•Forgets class schedule or assignments	<p><u>Thinking/Remembering:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">•Difficulty thinking clearly•Difficulty concentrating or remembering•Feeling more slowed down•Feeling sluggish, hazy, foggy, or groggy <p><u>Physical:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">•Headache or “pressure” in head•Nausea or vomiting•Balance problems or dizziness•Fatigue or feeling tired•Blurry or double vision•Sensitivity to light or noise•Numbness or tingling•Does not “feel right”	<p><u>Emotional:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">•Irritable•Sad•More emotional than usual•Nervous <p><u>Sleep*:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">•Drowsy•Sleeps less than usual•Sleeps more than usual•Has trouble falling asleep <p><i>*Only ask about sleep symptoms if the injury occurred on a prior day.</i></p>

LINKS TO OTHER RESOURCES

- CDC –Concussion in Sports
 - <http://www.cdc.gov/concussion/sports/index.html>
- National Federation of State High School Association/ Concussion in Sports - What You Need To Know
 - www.nfhslearn.com
- Montana High School Association – Sports Medicine Page
 - <http://www.mhsa.org/SportsMedicine/SportsMed.htm>